

**International Conference on Federalism
Mont-Tremblant, October 1999**

**Session 9) Introduction of Don Tapscott for his presentation:
"Governance in the Digital Economy"**

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During this third and last day of the Conference on Federalism, I have the pleasure of associating with a theme of the future -- the theme of governance in an era of digital economy -- and of presenting you with a person of great fame who will share his thoughts on a topic that will disrupt our lives.

This thought process brings to mind that the growth, the creation and the choice of our political institutions are never a pure coincidence but are perhaps the reflection of the characteristic features of each country and tied to a context that shapes events.

We have to remember, from the history of Quebec and Canada, a decision that was taken very early on and that constitutes to this day the corner stone of our country's existence.

After France ceded la Nouvelle-France to the English Government, it was very soon obvious that England was not about to hold on to its new territory unless it struck a partnership with the French population.

Circumstances at that time led to a great compromise solution and a new partnership.

The Government of England chose by law, in the way of the Quebec Act of 1774, to formally recognise the rights of the French population. Our language, our religion and our civil rights system were formally recognised. Since then, we saw the birth of a partnership between the English and French populations. To this day, this alliance is one of the fundamental characteristics of Canada.

History does not stop there. We have since then, and despite the sometimes stormy and difficult debates, given birth to a country.

In 1867, the initial partnership evolved into a federation of four provinces. This common vision grew; it prospered over the years. Today, 10 provinces and 3 territories stretch the width of a continent.

The people of Quebec and other Canadians worked hard together. Quebec and Canada also gave themselves an economic and social partnership that allowed us to become one of the great countries of the world.

Here, it is important to remember an element within this context, which will have been a determining factor for the events of our history.

Today, we will hear the words of the President of the United States. In fact, the American presence is closely linked to the history of Quebec and Canada.

At every step of the way as we evolved, the Quebec Act of 1774 and up to the debate on Free Trade, the actors on Quebec's and Canada's political arena always have wanted to distinguish themselves from the American political experience and provide themselves with their very own system.

The fear and sometimes the threat of being integrated to the United States has galvanized the will of every generation of political leaders in Quebec and in Canada. We may not have always agreed on what our own internal objectives were but we certainly agreed that we did not want to be part of the United States.

I hope our American friends and neighbours won't take this personally because we are truly, I believe, the best neighbours in the world. We share a lot, we have a lot in common but we also have different values.

- Our view of what should be the role of government is very different. In the battle between the Hamiltonian view and the Jeffersonian view, in Canada, as opposed to the United States, the Hamiltonians won.
- We have a tradition of recognizing not only individual rights but also collective rights.
- We have chosen to live in a country with two languages, two cultures, and to shape our institutions accordingly.
- Long before the word "Globalization" became a cliché and the world would be engulfed in changes that would see the emergence of national and multiple identities, we had recognized that our nationhood would be constructed on the basis of diversity. This implies a high level of tolerance in a world where tolerance is essential to our survival.

The challenge of Quebec and Canada is to find once again the leadership that is necessary to allow the Federation to evolve towards a partnership.

In that respect, allow me to point to three great challenges:

Firstly, to recognize the specific quality of Quebec by affirming its identity.

Secondly, to better acknowledge Native people and the place that they must occupy.

Thirdly, to strive for a federalism that is more flexible and concerned with the preservation of the distinctiveness that expresses itself within that framework.

The Canadian Federation is also ready now for some significant changes in its own rules of governance. In areas of shared jurisdiction or shared responsibility, the days of unilateral decision-making are gone.

We have started to explore and we should vigorously pursue a decision-making process based on co-management and co-decision making. Through these changes, we should seek better accountability on behalf of government and also more provincial autonomy because it makes better sense to keep decision-making as close as possible to the people who are impacted by these decisions.

As you depart this conference, many of you may still be intrigued about what the future holds for Quebec and Canada.

Let me offer you some perspective.

Over the last few days, you have had a good sampling of our political, how should I call it, political dialogue.

These debates have been going on in one form or another for a few hundred years. Canada has endured as a country because the people of Quebec and other Canadians continue to share the same basic values.

The people of Quebec and other Canadians still share the same values. Our common will to live together and respect each other and to share the same destiny remains intact.

Our history in Quebec and in Canada is not limited to the last thirty days, or to the last thirty years.

Quebec and Canada's history is built upon many successes and is not summed up in a few episodes of negotiation on constitutional amendments.

And while we recognize the importance of making changes to our federation, I don't believe that Canada will be dissolved following a disagreement on the topic of a Student loans and bursary program.

The Quebec that I believe in is a Quebec that assumes its role as a leader in

Canada as a whole.

The people of Quebec are very proud of what they have built. The people of Quebec were always present in federal institutions and had it not been for their leadership, Canada would not be what it is today.

The influence, the respect and the quality place that Quebec and Canada were able to shape for themselves among the family of nations were rendered possible due to the fact that we made the difficult choice of building a country with two languages and two cultures. We gave ourselves a greater window onto the world and history will uphold that we were the forerunners. Thanks to that choice, we have a greater freedom and the people of Quebec will not shut that window on their future nor take away, for the future generations, this freedom that we so dearly won.

And now, let's hear more about the future. It is my pleasure to introduce Mr. Don Tapscott.

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